

John Caldwell Calhoun to Andrew Jackson, July 10, 1828, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

VICE-PRESIDENT CALHOUN TO JACKSON.¹

¹ See also Calhoun to Monroe, in *Correspondence of J. C. Calhoun* (Am. Hist. Assoc., *Ann. Rept.*, 1899, vol. II.), p. 266.

Pendleton, July 10, 1828.

Dear Sir, I have received your letter of the 25th May inclosing the letter of Mr Monroe to me of the 9th Sept. 1818. The delay incident to the passage of a letter from Nashville to Washington and thence to this place will explain the long interval between the date of your letter and this my acknowledgement of it.

The more I reflect on the subject, the more am I convinced, that the letter of the 9th Sept. was intended by those, who took it out of my possession, as the instrument of a dark and dangerous intrigue, alike hostile to you and myself. The first object certainly was to bring you and Mr Monroe into conflict; but I feel not less confident, that its ultimate was to bring you and myself into the same state, and that for the special benefit of those at the bottom of the scheme. I cannot doubt, but a part of the plan was to follow it up with secret and slanderous representation of my conduct. Knowing that my whole course had been open and strongly marked, the contrivers of this wicked scheme clearly saw the necessity of keeping my name at first out of view, and to attempt in the first instance to direct your suspicion against Mr Monroe. With this object, the letter was doubtless mutilated by tearing off the cover, so as to leave it uncertain, to whom it was addressed; and to the same motive must be traced the unfounded intimation, that the letter was

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communicated to you with my connivance, and with the intention of guarding you against treachery imputed to Mr Monroe; a course of conduct, which if true, would prove me to be equally cowardly and base. There need no other proof of the dark design, at the bottom of this affair, than the fact, that while these insidious intimations were made to you, the whole affair was studiously concealed from me. I was even ignorant, that the letter was out of my possession; and by mere accident, I obtained the clue, which has given me the little that I know about it. I was thus kept in the dark, while the plot rested on a supposition highly injurious to my character. It presupposes, that while Mr Monroe, under the garb of friendship, had formed an artful plan to entrap you into a correspondence, with the view of shifting the responsibility from himself by sacrificing you, that, I was to be the instrument in so base a transaction. Lost indeed would I have been to every sentiment of honor and virtue could such a proposition be made to me, without instant denunciation of its author. The mail that brought the letter would have returned with my resignation, and an eternal barrier would have been placed between us.

Far otherwise was my construction of the object of the letter. I never doubted, that it originated in motives at once friendly and patriotick; and that its object was to place your conduct, as well as that of the Government on the high grounds, on which it ought to stand, by each side presenting fully and distinctly on the records of the government its views in regard to the orders, under which you acted. Aney discussion of them now, I agree with you, would be unnecessary. They are matters of history, and must be left to the historian, as they stand. In fact, I never did suppose, that the justification of yourself or the government depended on a critical construction of them. It is sufficient for both, that they were honestly issued and honestly executed, without involving the question, whether they were executed strictly in accordance with the intention that they were issued. Honest and patriotick motives are all, that can be required, and I never doubted but that they existed on both sides. I will write to Mr Monroe on the subject to which you refer, and should I receive an answer will forward it immediately.

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You will see by the papers, that the Tariff of the last session excites much feeling in this, and the other Southern atlantick States. The impression, as far as I have observed, is nearly universal, that the system acts with great severity against the staple states, and that it is the real cause of their impoverishment. Under such impressions, it is not surprizing, that there should be some excess of feeling, but it would be wrong to infer, that it indicates a want of attachment to the Union: The long cherished attachment to our institutions is not so easily weakened, but as strong as it is, an impression of long continued wrongs would not fail to shake it. The beleif that those now in power will be displaced shortly; and that under an administration formed under your auspices, a better order of things will commence, in which, an equal distribution of the burden and benefit of goverment, economy, the payment of the publick debt, and finally the removal of oppressive duties, will be primary objects of policy is what mainly consoles this quarter of the Union under existing embarrassment. That your administration may be the means of restoring harmony to this distracted country and of averting the alarming crisis before us is my sincere prayer.

With sincere regard your friend